



MDCR/MCRC E-newsletter for September 30, 2013

[Challenge to Michigan gay marriage ban attracts debate from groups](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/29/13

A major legal challenge to Michigan's ban on gay marriage is attracting interest from conservative Christians, the Roman Catholic Church, law professors and civil libertarians as the state defends a 2004 constitutional amendment that defines marriage only as between a man and a woman.

[Arab-American group finds lack of evidence of harassment by director but removes him](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/28/13

An external investigation says there is insufficient evidence a Michigan Arab-American civil rights leader harassed women, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee said Friday.

[Barilla exec's anti-gays comments spark international boycott](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/27/13

The president of Italy-based Barilla, the world's largest pasta producer, sparked a boycott of his famed firm Thursday after saying he would not show gay families in the firm's ads.

[Local black history-makers will seek to inspire Detroit kids](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/27/13

Dozens of photos in Judge Craig Strong's jury room show off his colorful encounters with celebrities and historical figures.

[Settlement reached in 'No African American nurse' case](#)

From My Fox 2 Detroit, 9/27/13

FLINT, Mich. (WJBK) - Hurley Medical Center settled a lawsuit with one of its nurses who accused the hospital of allowing a patient to refuse care given by African Americans.

[Bills target human trafficking in Michigan, help for victims](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/26/13

Some state senators in Michigan hope a package of bills will help state law enforcement authorities better recognize and crack down on human trafficking, and better help social services professionals assist victims.

[Michigan to require same-sex married couples to file as singles](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/26/13

Same-sex couples who legally marry in another state won't be allowed to file their state of Michigan taxes jointly, the state Department of Treasury has ruled.

[Michigan groups receive \\$1.2 million to fight housing discrimination](#)

From MLive, 9/26/13

LANSING — Michigan fair housing organizations received nearly \$1.2 million in federal grants to combat housing discrimination.

[Fair Housing Center greets \\$325,000 federal grant with mixed emotions](#)

From MLive, 9/26/13

GRAND RAPIDS — It was with mixed emotions that the staff at the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan greeted the renewal of a \$325,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on Thursday, Sept. 26.

[Grand Rapids man, 85, sues Secretary of State after driver's license is yanked](#)

From MLive, 9/26/13

GRAND RAPIDS — Carl Hainer figures his clean driving record ought to count for something. But as he battles to hang onto his driver's license at 85, he said his age is the only thing being scrutinized.

[Schools criticized for bans on dreadlocks, afros](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/26/13

"Why are you so sad?" a TV reporter asked the little girl with a bright pink bow in her hair.

[Michigan settles lawsuit over disabled man's abuse for \\$145K](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/26/13

The state of Michigan has agreed to pay \$145,000 to settle a lawsuit by a man who said he was the victim of excessive force at a home for the disabled.

[Gender wage gap persists despite law, societal changes](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/26/13

The phrase "equal pay for equal work" is a catchy slogan. It's been the law of the land for 50 years. Statistically, though, it's known but not practiced.

['Religious exemption' adoption bills head to House floor with both sides talking 'discrimination'](#)

From MLive, 9/25/13

LANSING — A Michigan House panel on Wednesday approved legislation that would allow adoption agencies to object to placement of a child due to "sincerely held religious beliefs" and prohibit the state from denying them funding or grants if they do so.

[Feds question policy about Michigan court translators](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/25/13

Lansing — The federal government doesn't seem impressed with a new policy aimed at expanding translation services in Michigan courts.

[ACCESS gets grant to help aspiring U.S. citizens](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/25/13

Dearborn — A Dearborn-based nonprofit social and economic services agency has received about \$175,000 to broaden its work with those seeking U.S. citizenship.

[Diversity loses in some areas, holds steady in others](#)

From Bridge Magazine, 9/25/13

As the U.S. Supreme Court continues to wrestle with the issue of affirmative action in Michigan and around the nation, it's time to take a look at what the end of the practice in public and university decision-making has meant in our state.

[Affirmative action case to have broad impact](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/25/13

Los Angeles— For more than a decade, Elinam Dellor has studied in the University of California system during a divisive debate over affirmative action.

[2 from Michigan make Muslim advocacy group's Islamophobia list](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/24/13

A Michigan law firm and conservative commentator are among those accused of stirring anti-Islam sentiment across the country, according to a national Muslim civil rights and advocacy group report released last week.

[New website offers 'Welcome Mat' to immigrants in metro Detroit](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/24/13

A new website was launched Tuesday that offers immigrants information about services and non-immigrants helpful details about metro Detroit's diverse communities.

Detroit Corporation Counsel Up For DCR Position

From MIRS, 9/23/13

Detroit Corporation Counsel Portia ROBERSON is among the four finalists for the Department of Civil Rights (DCR) director position, the department announced today.

Roberson, a former President Barack OBAMA appointee, was considered a potential candidate for Attorney General (See "Obama Official Eyed For AG," 5/20/13).

She was later hired on as the corporation counsel in Detroit, after the controversial Krystal CRITTENDON was let go after challenging the city's consent agreement allegedly without Mayor Dave BING's consent. She joins Matt WESAW, the tribal chair for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, and a past chair of the Civil Rights Commission. Wesaw, in fact, helped hire outgoing director Daniel KRICHBAUM (See "Interim Label Removed From Krichbaum At DCR," 7/27/10).

The others two finalists are:

- Denise BROGAN-KATOR, senior legislative counsel to the Family Equality Council and an adjunct professor at the University of Michigan Law School. According to her bio on the university's website, Brogan-Kator is the first openly transgender law student to matriculate at the Law School. Prior to holding these positions, Brogan-Kator served as executive director of Equality Michigan.

- Eric WILLIAMS, Executive Director for Equity, Community and Legislative Affairs at Grand Rapids Community College. He is the only return finalist, and at the last meeting Vice Chair Lisa PEEPLES-HURST was so adamant in supporting him she voted against the appointment of an interim director (See "DCR Selects Interim Director, Restarts Permanent Director Search," 7/29/13).

After failing to settle on a candidate earlier this summer, Leslee FRITZ was selected as interim director.

The selection process this time around will move forward with a public meeting and interview session on Oct. 7.

[Rochelle Riley: Don't forget the 4 girls and the other civil rights martyrs](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/22/13

A week ago, the nation paused to remember four little girls killed by domestic terrorists 50 years before.

I ask you to remember them again.

[Outreach for new health law may be particularly tough for minority populations](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/22/13

Their clipboards and their pitch ready, the volunteers just wanted to hand out information.

[A Turnabout at Traditionally White Sororities, in Nine Days at Alabama](#)

From the New York Times, 9/20/13

ATLANTA — Nine days after the University of Alabama's campus newspaper detailed chronic racial discrimination within the campus's Greek system, the university's president said on Friday that six minority students had accepted offers of admission to traditionally white sororities.

[Michigan DHS chief: School suspensions, expulsions hurting African-Americans students' futures](#)

From MLive, 9/20/13

MUSKEGON — African-American students are being disproportionately affected by school expulsions and suspensions that jeopardize their ability to be successful in life, the director of the Michigan Department of Human Services told a Chamber of Commerce audience Friday.

[Eric Baerren: The state's definition of marriage reverts to Neanderthal era](#)

From MLive, 9/19/13

A response filed by Michigan attorney general Bill Schuette last week over a federal lawsuit that alleges that a law forbidding same sex couples from adopting children has generated quite a lot of noise. And, understandably.

[ACLU alleges racial profiling by Saginaw police](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/19/13

Saginaw — A civil liberties group has asked federal officials to expand an investigation of the city's police department launched after the fatal shooting of a homeless man.

Federal Department Raises Complaints About Court Interpreter Rule

From Gongwer, 9/19/13

A rule announced last week by the state Supreme Court to ensure persons with limited English ability have access to interpreters in courts was blasted by the U.S. Department of Justice as putting too great a financial burden on low-income individuals and therefore not providing meaningful access to the courts.

In a letter to the state, U.S. Assistant Attorney General Jocelyn Samuels, U.S. Attorney for Eastern Michigan Barbara McQuade and U.S. Attorney for Western Michigan Patrick Miles also said the rule could "represent a retreat rather than progress" in terms of providing access to individuals with limited English, because previously courts that provided interpreters did not charge, and the new rule will allow charging individuals considered financially able to pay for interpreters.

The rule was issued last week on a 6-1 vote by the court and requires all courts in the state to provide translation services when needed for individuals with limited English ability.

While the federal government has been pushing state courts, especially in Michigan, to provide translation service, in announcing the rule last week, Chief Justice Robert Young Jr. and Justice Bridget McCormack said the state had actually begun looking into the issue before the federal department urged action.

The letter said the rule made some progress towards assuring individuals with limited English they could have improved access.

But the department raised strong objections to the proposal that individuals with incomes of at least 125 percent of the federal poverty level be eligible to pay for those services.

"Meaningful access to state courts in Michigan can be achieved only with additional improvements to (the rule) and with actions that ensure nondiscriminatory implementation statewide," the letter said.

In fact, without changes, the rule could result in "national origin discrimination."

Since an income of 125 percent of the poverty level equates to less than \$14,400 for an individual, the letter said, "This rule creates a significant burden on working families (with limited English abilities) and individuals who have no choice but to resolve crucial issues through court proceedings such as child custody, domestic violence, juvenile justice, evictions and foreclosures, and criminal proceedings where one's liberty is at stake."

And the letter said such a provision stood in "stark contrast" to state court rules that do not require deaf individuals, no matter their income, to pay the cost of their interpreters. The state should consider setting a similar policy, the letter said.

The letter concluded that the department had worked with other states to set up an acceptable system that ensured sufficient access for all persons, and it was confident Michigan could do so as well.

In his dissent last week on the rule, Justice Stephen Markman said the rule was being imposed on the state by the U.S. department and said there were suggestions the state could lose federal funding unless it acted. The letter, however, does not suggest the state could lose funds if changes were not made to the rule.

But the letter did say the department has been investigating the state courts in terms of meeting its civil rights rules and that on that basis was disappointed the rule "did not reciprocate our concerted efforts to ensure that Michigan state courts meet their longstanding civil rights obligations."

[5 marching orders from Grand Rapids, and why 1 soon might be a civil right](#)

From MLive, 9/18/13

GRAND RAPIDS – Make your wager now: the interim director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights bets sexual orientation and gender identity will get added to the state's civil rights law in 2015.

[Michigan's Department of Civil Rights celebrates 50 years](#)

From Michigan Radio, 9/17/13

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights was created as part of the state constitution drafted in 1963. It's charged with enforcing civil rights laws and preventing discrimination.

[Civil rights meeting in Kalamazoo addresses history, current issues](#)

From MLive, 9/17/13

KALAMAZOO — Several community leaders gathered Tuesday afternoon for a conversation on civil rights, which ranged from the history of civil rights in Kalamazoo to the most pressing issues in the city today.

[Miss America Nina Davuluri brushes off racist '7-11,' '9/11' remarks](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/17/13

Social media was abuzz overnight in the wake of Nina Davuluri being crowned as Miss America 2014.

[College students with disabilities find options](#)

From the Lansing State Journal, 9/16/13

ALLEN PARK — As he sits in class at Eastern Michigan University, a flood of images streams from Tony Saylor's vibrant, creative mind down through his pen and onto paper.

[World remembers four girls on bombing anniversary](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/16/13

It was a low point in a painful year that also included the assassination of President John Kennedy and the murder of NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers.

[Americans with Disabilities Act event in Flint highlights Michigan's non-compliance with law](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/16/13

LANSING — It was billed as a celebration of the landmark federal law intended to make sure disabled people have equal access to public facilities.

[A welcome to Michigan's immigrants](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/16/13

From September 15-22, Michigan will join communities across the country to celebrate the second annual National Welcoming Week, a nationwide event that promotes meaningful connections and a spirit of unity among U.S. and foreign-born Americans. Across Michigan, immigrants and U.S.-born individuals will come together to create stronger communities through local events focusing on volunteerism, civic participation, and creative expression.

[Teen bullied in homecoming prank returns to less dramatic life](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/15/13

West Branch — Whitney Kropp will not be homecoming queen this year. And she's OK with that. She doesn't need the drama.

[Mecosta County structure fire investigated as arson, possible hate crime](#)

From MLive, 9/14/13

MECOSTA COUNTY, MI — A structure fire early Saturday morning on Arthur Road in Sheridan Township may have been set intentionally, according to the Mecosta County Sheriff's Office.

[Justice Department Reaches Settlement with Staffing Company to Resolve Immigration-related Unfair Employment Practices](#)

From the US Department of Justice, 9/13/13

The Justice Department announced today that it reached an agreement with Kelly Services Inc., a staffing company based in Troy, Mich., resolving an allegation of discrimination based on citizenship status during the employment eligibility re-verification process at one of its branch locations in Schaumburg, Ill. The investigation was initiated by the department's Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices (OSC) based on information obtained from a former employee of the company who had contacted that office.

[Report: U. of Ala. sororities barred blacks](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/12/13

A sorority at the University of Alabama says it is investigating allegations in a student publication that it was among Panhellenic organizations on the campus that allegedly blocked two black women from pledging, and a judge who serves on the university's board says the number of those rejected is higher and is asking school leadership to investigate.

[Black infants 5 times more likely than whites to die in Kalamazoo, and disparity is growing](#)

From MLive, 9/12/13

KALAMAZOO — Kalamazoo is literally the land of The Promise, where a child who calls this city home can attend a Michigan college for free.

Supreme Court Issues Order On Translation Services In Courts

From Gongwer, 9/11/13

In a move it said will help assure access to justice to Michigan residents who have limited English-speaking skills, the Supreme Court unveiled an order Wednesday requiring all courts in the state to provide interpreters for those individuals.

Under the order, persons who can afford translation services will be charged for those services, while lower-income individuals will not.

In a press conference, Chief Justice Robert Young Jr. and Justice Bridget McCormack said the rule would help "every person, every party" have access to the court system. That would include situations such as domestic abuse cases where a spouse needs to request a personal protection order, but has difficulty speaking English.

That would prevent, Mr. Young said, a situation of a judge saying, "Please bring your husband in to translate for you. That would be a problem."

The order was not unanimous. Justice Stephen Markman dissented, arguing the state was effectively being coerced into creating the rule by the U.S. Department of Justice or face the prospect of the state losing federal funds. "The rules being adopted today under the coercive circumstances created by the (Department of Justice) are both unnecessary and ill-advised," Mr. Markman said.

But in the press conference, Mr. Young said former Justice Marilyn Kelly began working on the issue before the federal government sent a letter to all state supreme courts calling on those courts to help assist persons officially designated limited-English-proficient.

Already a number of counties provide translation service and assistance to persons with actions before the courts, the two justices said, and they praised Wayne County particularly.

But not all counties provide such service, they said, and under the rules and order issued, all the courts must prepare a language access plan as a local administrative order by December 11.

Those affected by the order will be anyone with legal decision-making authority, which could include a parent in juvenile matters. The rules and order also deal with any trial, hearing or appearance before any judge, magistrate, referee or other hearing officer.

The rules require the courts to use certified interpreters for limited English participants. If a certified translator is not available, the court will then have to assess whether the proceeding should be delayed or if the court should use a qualified translator.

Mr. Young and Ms. McCormack also said technology could assist a court by accessing a translator online or by telephone.

Mr. Young said he was unaware of any case where lack of access to a translator had been an issue in an appeal. "But that is not a reason not to act," Mr. Young said.

In his dissent, Mr. Markman said the federal "demands" were "staggering," and effectively would allow a "Gulf state emir or a South American multi-millionaire businessman" who may choose to file a lawsuit have access to free translation services.

Theoretically, he argued, the Supreme Court would also have to have translators available for the court's learning center.

And, Mr. Markman said, the federal government fails to show how the current system has failed to ensure persons have access to justice if they have limited English skills.

[Hassan Jaber: The price we continue to pay after 9/11](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/11/13

Every year at this time, Americans pause to pay solemn tribute to the innocent lives lost in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Every year, the news media revisit the event and we recall where we were when we heard the news.

[Bill would allow religious, moral objections in adoption placements](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/11/13

LANSING — Adoption agencies could refuse to place children in homes based on religious or moral beliefs, according to a bill that will be considered by the state House on Wednesday.

[The fastest cultural attitude shift is over LGBT rights](#)

From Michigan Radio, 9/10/13

There's something fascinating about the period in which two cultures or technologies clash. Usually, it is clear after a few months or years which side is going to win. But there are always holdouts. Sometimes these struggles are intense, short and complete, as when the VHS format for videotapes defeated the Betamax technology back in the early 1980s. It took somewhat longer for DVDs to beat out videotapes, but it was again clear which would win.

[Judge: Abercrombie wrongly fired Muslim for hijab](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/9/13

San Francisco — A federal judge in San Francisco has ruled trendy clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch wrongly fired a Muslim worker who insisted on wearing a head scarf.

[Why GVSU is launching minor in LGBTQ Studies](#)

From MLive, 9/9/13

Allendale — Grand Valley State University has launched a minor in LGBTQ Studies, a growing – but still relatively new – field that focuses on the issues and debates surrounding sexuality and gender.

[Lost in the translation – A lack of interpreters raises risks in health care](#)

From the Battle Creek Enquirer, 9/8/13

Rebecca Gomez has lived in Battle Creek for 12 years. The 35-year-old does not speak fluent English, but understands it better than her husband.

Local LGBT Nondiscrimination Laws Cover 1/5 of State

From Gongwer, 9/8/13

A big effort from supporters of protecting the LGBT community from discrimination in employment or housing because of their sexual orientation has led to the enactment this year of several local nondiscrimination ordinances with 18.4 percent of the state's population now living in communities with such laws.

Joining the list this in recent weeks were Battle Creek and Meridian, Oshtemo and Kalamazoo townships. That pushes the number of communities in Michigan with such ordinances to 27, and while that is just a fraction of Michigan's 1,800 local governments, they are mostly populous communities with a combined population of 1,817,890, based on 2010 Census numbers.

Activists are hoping to add several more communities this fall with efforts underway in the Lansing area in Delhi, Delta and Lansing townships, as well as Jackson and another attempt in Holland after one was rejected a few years ago. The only recent setback came in Montcalm County's Eureka Township in August where the board rejected a proposed ordinance.

The effort comes as discussions continue behind the scenes in the Legislature about amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination against persons based on their race, gender, religion, disabilities and several other factors - but not sexual orientation. While the discussions and preparations proceed, the focus is on enacting local ordinances.

Emily Dievendorf, managing director of Equality Michigan, said the progress at the local level is encouraging.

"We're really happy with what that says about the progress we're making and that Michigan citizens are stepping forward," she said.

While the ordinances vary somewhat from community to community, they generally allow legal action against a person or entity discriminating against a person in employment or housing. That legal action can sometimes be civil or criminal and referred to local prosecutors and law enforcement.

It is the enforcement side that varies most from community to community, Ms. Dievendorf said. Sometimes, there is no designated person or department for a discrimination incident to go.

That is one of the reasons why, while the movement on local ordinances is positive, eventually changing Elliott-Larsen is so important, Ms. Dievendorf said. The Department of Civil Rights' principal purpose is to investigate and prosecute violations of the act.

"As long as there are pockets of protection and pockets of vulnerability, if you were a citizen coming to Michigan, where would you want to reside?" she said. "We hear discrimination cases and we hear the stories of people leaving Michigan because they are not protected."

Even as the push on local ordinances continues, Ms. Dievendorf voiced optimism about the Legislature eventually extending Elliott-Larsen's protections for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgendered.

"Michigan citizens are ready to see it happen. Michigan businesses are ready to see it happen," she said. "Some really great conversations are taking place. Both Republicans and Democrats would really like to see a fairer Michigan. I expect us to make more progress a lot sooner than people would expect, and I think everybody's ready for it."

East Lansing City Councilmember Nathan Triplett has been involved with efforts to pass local nondiscrimination ordinances for several years and said the pace of success has rapidly accelerated, and that was especially true in August. Mr. Triplett said for the first time, this summer, communities began adopting ordinances without his knowledge that such an effort was underway.

In the past 17 months, the number of municipalities with such ordinances has gone from 18 to 27, he said.

"It wouldn't surprise me if by the end of this calendar year clearly we'll pass 30, and I think you'll just see the momentum continue to build," he said. "Clearly it reflects the change in overall societal attitudes toward the LGBT community."

Like Ms. Dievendorf, Mr. Triplett said while the local ordinances provide real protection, enforcement can suffer if the local government lacks the resources, making a statewide law far more preferable. But Mr. Triplett said he hopes the leadership local governments have taken on the issue will build momentum for legislative action.

The climate is completely different from 2001, when Mr. Triplett said he was involved in an effort to defeat a proposal to remove protections for the LGBT community in Kalamazoo's ordinance. The city retained the language, but it was a difficult fight and considerable ill will toward the LGBT community was involved.

Now, many of these ordinances see little to no opposition, he said.

"In just over a decade, there's been a complete sea change in how people in Michigan respond to the question of whether you can be fired for being gay," he said.

[African-Americans leaders in Kalamazoo hope racial-profiling study will lead to change](#)

From MLive, 9/7/13

KALAMAZOO — Mattie Jordan-Woods said she can remember feeling she was racially profiled in three separate instances about a decade ago while driving in her neighborhood.

Report: Affirmative Action Yields Mixed Results

From MIRS, 9/6/13

Seven years after Michiganders approved a ballot proposal banning affirmative action, a new report finds that diversity has been maintained in some areas, but sharply declined in others.

The Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion today released a report outlining changes in diversity at many levels of government. At least, where they could find it.

"The lack of data in many areas indicates a willful avoidance of a data driven government," said Tom COSTELLO, president and CEO of the Michigan Roundtable. "It also puts the onus on the individual to prove discrimination, and allows governmental institutions to turn a blind eye to their internal practices that are often the reason for a lack of diversity."

It was hard to collect data on things like municipal police and firefighters. But one place where the report found a decrease in diversity was in Gov. Rick SNYDER's highest level of appointments.

"Additionally, the governor's appointments to state departments show his concern for diversity, or lack thereof. Of the 19 offices (including himself and Lt. Gov. Brian Calley) there are only six women and no people of color serving as of March 2013," noted the report.

Snyder spokesperson Sara WURFEL said it seems as if the report were missing key info, pointing out that the head of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) was a person of color. In addition, she pointed to earlier appointments and the various Emergency Managers with diverse backgrounds Snyder has selected.

Diversity, in all the ways it comes, is clearly important and a focus for the governor and his administration. A high priority is placed on talent acquisition and making sure we have the best fit and best skill set, and diversity plays a key role in that as well as experience, background, passion, etc. Not just in our Cabinet, but throughout state government and the 200 plus boards and commissions that Michiganders serve on," said Wurfel.

State employees in general have become more diverse, the data shows. Between 2005 and 2011, the proportion of white people has gone down, while female, African American and Latino numbers have climbed.

"If anything, the share of African Americans in state government has increase (sic) somewhat, while the share of whites has declined," noted the report.

One area that doesn't seem to be affected -- and the one that served as the impetus for the proposal -- is that of university enrollment. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) shows university diversity has remained fairly steady.

However, Michigan's smaller universities are seeing minorities comprise a larger percent of total students, while larger universities have seen decreased enrollment of diverse populations.

Medical school enrollment, however, was a different story. Enrollment for students of color was down 7 percent between 2006 and 2011, and enrollment for women was down one percent over the same period.

[Civil rights groups worry stop-and-frisk policies coming to Detroit](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 9/6/13

A coalition of civil rights advocates spoke out today against the Detroit Police Department's decision to hire consultants with a conservative group that promoted the controversial stop-and-frisk program in New York City that critics say tramples on constitutional rights.

[See list of inductees to 30th Michigan Women's Hall of Fame](#)

From MLive, 9/5/13

The Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame announced that it will mark its 30th anniversary of its celebration of women on Oct. 17 at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference

[MLK's dream not yet realized at college graduation – it's not even close](#)

From MLive, 9/4/13

Paulette Granberry Russell remembers walking on the sprawling campus of Michigan State University as a scared, under-prepared freshman.

Lawmaker Restarting Faith-Based Adoption Services Discussion

From MIRS, 9/4/13

The debate over the freedom of faith-based adoption agencies is expected to continue this session from last year to the chagrin of same-sex couples.

HB 4928, sponsored by Rep. Kenneth KURTZ (R-Coldwater), would allow adoption agencies to refuse facilitating adoptions that run contrary to their religion or policies, while still being eligible for government grants and contracts.

"Agencies in other states were forced to close their doors when presented with the choice between protecting their values and providing adoption or foster care services," Kurtz said. "I don't want to see that happen in Michigan."

The bill was referred to the House Families, Children, and Seniors Committee, which Kurtz chairs.

He said HB 4928 is going to add some minor changes in terms of the timing and reporting clarification regarding adoption, compared to the old bill package that was introduced last year.

Christian churches, particularly the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) are among of the main supporters of his bill, Kurtz said.

But Emily DIEVENDORF, the managing director for the Equality Michigan, said it's "unfortunate" to see the bill reintroduced. She said it would harm Michigan kids who need a caring family that may be composed of a gay or lesbian couple.

In response to that, Kurtz said his bill is designed to ensure some agencies can practice adoption services based on their faith, instead of leaving same-sex couples out of the adoption process. He noted there still are agencies that would work with those families.

When the bill is discussed in the committee, Dievendorf said her organization is going to fight hard and make citizens know that legislative leaders are trying to "deny children a loving home" and to use public funds to discriminate against Michigan families, such as same-sex couples.

She said they want lawmakers know that Michigan citizens don't want to see it happen.

In addition, using public funds to supplement the cost of adoption agencies that refuse same-sex couples' rights contradicts to the separation of church and state, Dievendorf said.

According to the Department of Human Services, nearly 300 out of 3,000 Michigan foster children who are available for adoption don't have an identified adoptive family.

"This legislation will ensure that the diversity of agencies and the choice for adoptive parents are protected moving forward," Kurtz said. "I will continue to work with the Michigan Department of Human Services to ensure that the protection for agencies puts Michigan's children first."

[Milan schools working to develop new logo](#)

From MLive, 9/4/13

Milan Area Schools may soon have a new district logo, the Milan News Leader reported.

[Relieve Michigan's migrant worker shortage](#)

From the Detroit News, 9/3/13

A seasonal workers shortage in Michigan is causing fruit and vegetable farmers to leave crops rotting in the field, which means lost income to them and the state. The situation would be eased if the U.S. House would move forward on immigration reform.

[No fault insurance clause sends Potterville retiree's premium through the roof](#)

From the Lansing State Journal, 9/2/13

POTTERVILLE — At 65 years old, Penny Ruff is enjoying the days of retirement she has spent her life planning for, saving for, budgeting for.

State Departments Asked To Produce More Reports

From Gongwer, 8/30/13

The number of reports the Legislature requires from state departments will hit a five-year high in the upcoming budget year, according to House Fiscal Agency (HFA) data.

Depending on whom you ask, the trend signals either a greater push for transparency or a changing relationship between the executive branch and the legislative branch.

Annually, the HFA publishes a list of the reports required from state departments because of boilerplate language placed in the state budget. Since Gov. Rick SNYDER and the current slate of legislative leaders took over more than two and half years ago, the total number of reports required has climbed each budget year.

Boilerplate language in the budget approved this year for Fiscal Year FY 2014 requires 508 reports or postings.

In FY 2013, the total was 472. And for FY 2012, the total was at 434.

The reports cover a wide variety of details about government and a wide variety of state operations.

Some of the subjects are simple, like out-of-state travel logs for state employees. For instance, the Department of Education has to turn in such a report by Jan. 1 of each year.

Others are more complex.

For example, the Department of Community Health has to turn in a report on the "effectiveness of treatment programs for heroin and other opiates" by May 15, 2014. Likewise, by June 1, the Michigan Strategic Fund has to report on all expenditures and revenues received from the use of the "Pure Michigan" brand.

As for where the reports go, that detail varies, as well. Some are required to be posted for the public. Others go to the fiscal agencies, the state budget director, the Department of Treasury or local governments.

The total of 508 reports required by the budget's boilerplate language for FY 2014 is the highest of the five years available on the HFA website.

Back to FY 2010, the total was 501. In FY 2011, the total was 486.

The 508 number marks a 17 percent increase since current legislative leaders signed off on the budget for FY 2012.

Ari ADLER, spokesman for the House Republicans, said the idea behind the reporting requirements is to increase transparency and to assist with legislative oversight.

"We do not want to require reports simply to have reports produced," Adler explained. "They should prove useful so they are constantly under review."

If lawmakers find a report is no longer needed, Adler said, a requirement may change.

On the other side of the aisle, Rep. Fred DURHAL (D-Detroit), a member of the House Appropriations Committee, described the Legislature's push for more reports as a reaction to the current administration's practice of providing less specific budget plans by rolling up line items.

"Even the Republicans are finding that if they don't require reports they won't get information," Durhal said.

Lawmakers often want to collect specific information for constituents, Durhal explained. Over the last three budget years, the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) have been asked to produce the biggest increases in required reports.

DHS has gone from just 37 required reports in FY 2012 to 61 in FY 2014. That's a 64 percent increase.

Some of the new reports for the new budget year include maintaining a searchable website of "expenditures, vendor and employee information" and detailing the number of foster children under DHS supervision who do and do not experience breaks in Medicaid coverage during the year.

Another reporting requirement says DHS must release by Nov. 30 the total number of car repair payments, including "the number of payments for car repairs that exceed \$500, number of payments for repairs that cost exactly \$500 and number of payments for car repairs that cost exactly \$900."

Asked about the reporting requirements, DHS spokesman Dave AKERLY noted that the department is the second-largest agency in the state, which means there's a lot of oversight.

"No one volunteers for more reports, but we understand what the Legislature is looking for here and it's always our aim to accommodate their wishes and deliver when it comes to that oversight," Akerly added.

Over in MDARD, that department's required reports have almost doubled in the last three years.

The new reports include maintaining a website page with expenditures by category, appropriation unit and vendor, number of active employees by job classification, job specifications and wage rates.

By Nov. 1, the Michigan Gaming Control Board under MDARD must report expenditure data "used to determine the actual regulatory costs of conducting racing dates."

In the spirit of transparency, MDARD spokeswoman Jennifer HOLTON said the department is happy to provide the information the Legislature wants.

She said the increase in workload is small for staff.

"It's information that we collect anyway," Holton noted. "If the Legislature would like to have it, we're happy to provide it."

Some of the most debated new reporting requirements came for the Department of Civil Rights (DCR). After DCR filed a complaint with the U.S. government about Native American mascots being used by Michigan schools, DCR now has to notify key lawmakers and the State Budget Office before submitting a report or a complaint to the federal government.

The budget also includes new language that requires a detailed report annually from DCR on the number of complaints the DCR receives.

Earlier this year, Vicki LEVENGOOD, director of communications for DCR, said the department has no problem talking to the Legislature about its operations (See "Mascot Complaint Yields New Reporting Requirements For Civil Rights," 5/19/13).